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ABSTRACT

Characteristics of private and public schools were compared in this study utilizing data collected in surveys by the National Institute of Education, the Council for American Private Education, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The aims of the study were to provide a national picture of secondary education and increase understanding of private secondary education in particular. For the private school study, 600 private schools were randomly selected from four regions of the country and three metropolitan areas. These schools were surveyed concerning curriculum, schedules, facilities, school structure, coordination mechanisms, and principals' goals, satisfactions, experience, and problems. The data from private and public schools were then utilized to compare the two on the above characteristics as well as on grading systems, student goals and activities, and sex of principal. The study concluded that public and private schools differ in mission. Public schools provide a wide range of courses to a wide range of students, have more management problems, and are not dependent on maintaining a constituency. Private schools, on the other hand, have a narrower curriculum focused on academic subjects, have fewer management problems, and are more responsive to their clientele and staff. (Author/JM)

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Private High Schools: A Descriptive Profile and Comparison with Public High Schools

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INTRODUCTION

Private schools account for nearly 10 percent of the education sector when various gross measures are employed to quantify their importance: Number of students, numbers of schools, and number of dollars spent. This translates into 4.8 million students, 17,950 schools, and approximately $8.6 billion.[1] While the precentage is small, the numbers are not. Given the sizeable investment in American private education, it is suprising how little is known about it.

Within the last several years, two issues have brought private education into the public limelight. First, the education sector is contracting as national enrollments decline. Since there are less students to go around, the distribution of students between the public and private sector is becoming more important. Enrollments in nonpublic schools are relatively stable in comparison with those in the public sector, while enrollments in certain subsectors are actually increasing (Erickson, 1978). The only significant decline over the past decade has occurred in Catholic schools, which account for three-fourths of the nonpublic school enrollments.

Second, interest is growing in a program of government support for private education. The 95th Congess seriously considered enacting a tuition tax credit bill, and while it did not pass, the impetus behind the bill remains strong. A tax deduction for private schools has withstood a legal challenge in Minnesota, although a voucher plan that appeared on the ballot in Michigan was defeated. In addition, a voucher initiative is likely to reach the California ballot in June, 1980.

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1. Definitive number about private education are hard to come by. These figures are the best available. "Private School, Basic Information," Council of American Private Education, March, 1978.

Motivating this interest in nonpublic education are a series of complex and complicated perceptions about the nature of both public and nonpublic education. On one side, many believe that public education has lost touch with its clients, that educational efficiency and productivity are on the wane, and that the system is becoming increasingly bureaucratized (West, 1977). On the other hand, many, especially those who can afford it and many who can't, find that private schools offer something special. Underlying the pros and cons of a public vs. a private education is the issue of parental choice over the education of their children.

Indeed, there is support for both sides of the argument. Some researchers have found that growth among nonpublic schools is most pronounced where public education has been in the greatest disfavor, most noticeably in the South and Southwest (Erickson, 1978). Common complaints about public schools center on drug abuse, loose discipline, sex education, controversial books, and lack of academic rigor. While racism, in many instances, may have spawned the growth of private schools such as the southern academies, there are other less simplistic explanations. Widespread fear and distrust of public schools and a desire on the part of parents to establish schools that are identified with religion and "old fashion" American values appear to be just as important (Nevin, 1976). Parents also choose to enroll their children in private schools because of the unavailability of certain services in the public schools and a preference or need for special teaching methods (Porter, 1973).

While public schools may have attributes that parents don't care for, private schools may have attributes they want enough to pay for, according to research on the most commonly studied types of non-public schools: independent schools, religious academics (Catholic, Lutheran, Jewish, etc.) and alternative schools. The elite preparatory schools are known for their highly middle class, ambitious, and bright students and emphasis on academic excellence and college preparation (Baird, 1977). Uniformity of purpose also characterizes parochial schools. Students are, by and large, better disciplined, more highly motivated toward college and professional occupations and come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds than their public school counterparts. Similarly, the parochial schools concentrate more on the basics whereas the public schools tend to offer a broader curriculum (Morton, 1977).

While homogeneity of clientele and goal directedness may characterize the independent and religious schools, these attributes do not guarantee excellence in education. For example, southern segregation academies, despite student and faculty commitment, have fewer facilities and a poor and narrow curriculum (Nevin, 1976).

Independent and religious schools are usually more structured and focused than alternative schools. While the survival rate of alternative schools has been low due to organizational and monetary problems (Deal, 1975; Wurst, 1975), those which survive tend to be less bureacratic than public schools (Duke, 1976). Alternative schools appear to

minimize centralization of authority, functional specialization, and standardization of procedures, using instead participatory involvement and decisionmaking.

Regardless of whether parental dislike of public education or preference for private education is the motivating factor, a common theme in the current debate about private education is the issue of choice. Many believe that public education is a virtual monopoly, with minimal diversity and parental input. In the face of a public bureaucracy, parents feel powerless to successfully affect the education of their children. The recurrent interest in educational vouchers (Coons and Sugarman, 1978; Cohen and Ferrar, 1977), tuition credits, and tax deductions for private schools provide testimony to the small but increasing interest in governmental support of parental choice.

Aim of this Study

The National Institute of Education (NIE) together with the Council of American Private Education (CAPE), the largest umbrella group of nonpublic school organizations, undertook a survey of private high schools. The aim of the undertaking was several fold. First, we wanted to provide a national picture of secondary education. This project, then, was a companion piece to a survey of public high schools conducted by NIE and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The analysis of data from both surveys allow us to compare the services and organization of both public and private high schools.

Second, we wanted to increase our understanding of private secondary education. The data that exists in this area is sparse. Individual associations (National Association of Independent Schools, National Education Association, Lutheran Synod, etc.) survey their member schools to determine expenditures, program, and staffing information, but little data exists on the totality of the private education enterprise. The National Center of Education Statistics has been collecting data about enrollments, student bodies, and programs in private schools across the country for the past two years, so baseline data is beginning to accumulate.

Concerns about the provision of services in private education are somewhat different than those in the public sector. The public debate about high schools at the beginning of the 70's focused on the inability of secondary education to meet the needs of their clientele (Coleman, 1973; Brown, 1973; Martin, 1974). Critics commonly accused public schools of too large and overly bureaucratic and housing authoritarian teachers and alienated students. Such an institution, many believe, cannot adequately address the needs of the academically excellent or disadvantaged. The focus of the survey of public high schools, then, was to examine the extent to which their programs and management do or do not meet the needs of a widely heterogeneous student population.

Concerns in the private sector, however, are markedly different. Most private schools are considerably smaller organizations than

public schools. Nor do private schools have a guaranteed clientele. Consequently, managers must devote time and effort to insuring that the school stays in business and remains attractive to its constituency. Despite the environmental and fiscal uncertainty that many private schools face, private schools obviously have much to offer parents. Parents choose private schools which espouse a philosophy similar to their own, where the likelihood of the child's receiving individualized attention and an education stressing the basics is high, and when neighborhood public schools fall short.

Given the wide range of expectations and opinions people have about private education, we believed that it was important to determine what kinds of services and programs private schools actually provide. Therefore, in our survey, we inquire about the kinds of courses, both traditional and nontraditional, that schools offer. We also inquired about programs which meet speical needs, such as alternative ways to earn academic credit, advanced placement, and remedial courses.

Expectations also exist with regard to how private schools are organized and managed. The public perception is that private schools are more open to parent involvement and decisionmaking and have a less cumbersome bureaucracy. To test these views of private school management, our survey inquires about the structure and coordination mechanisms that exist in private schools. By structure we mean the role the principal plays, what kinds of staff are available, and the breadth of decisionmaking participation. Coordination, on the other hand, is the means through which management controls the activities of school participants by use of rules, meetings, and teacher evaluation.

SAMPLE

Six hundred private schools, approximately 13 percent of the private high school universe were randomly selected from four regions of the country (East, South, Midwest, and West) and from three metropolitan status areas (urban, suburban, and rural), resulting in 12 cells. To insure that the student population would be nationally representative, we selected schools within each cell on the basis of 12th grade enrollment using probability sampling. This sampling method guarantees that the number of schools in the sample represents the proportional number of students in the population that attend schools in various cells. Therefore, the students in rural and small schools were not overrepresented, nor were the students in urban and large schools underrepresented.

The survey instrument, a joint product of NIE, NAASP, and CAPE, was administered in Fall, 1977. A total of 454 useable responses were received, resulting in a 75.6 percent response rate.

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2. The Curriculum Information Center, Denver, Colorado provided the listing of the "universe" of public and private secondary schools--defined as schools with a 12th grade graduating class--from which the sample was selected.

(Summarize response by regions and urbanicity)

The Participating Schools

Classified by the Census Bureau's metropolitan status categories, 70 percent of the schools are suburban, 15 percent, urban; and 14 percent rural.[3] According to principal's own reports of their locations, 28 percent of the schools are in suburbs or small towns, 16 percent are rural, and 54 percent are in medium or large cities. Because these percentages are more valid than Census designations, we used principals' own reports of metropolitan status to classify schools as urban, rural, and suburban.

The private schools sampled are located predominantly in the East (39%) and Midwest (36%), with the remainder almost evenly divided between the South and West. Most of the schools are affiliated with the Catholic Church (78%), and in this regard are representative of the Catholic school population which accounts for three-fourths of the private school enrollment. The private schools are also relatively small, with enrollments ranging from as low as 14 to as high as 2,563. The average enrollment is 468. Enrollment distributions of the schools surveyed appear in Table 1.

Day students predominate (83%), with a small percentage of the schools (13%) serving both day and residential students. The students are mostly white with only a quarter of the schools enrolling more than 20 percent minorities.

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3. The Census Bureau definitions tend to underestimate the non-metropolitan locations: towns within the boundaries of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), no matter how small, are considered suburban or urban.

Table 1

Private School Enrollments

Enrollment	Percentage of Schools
0 - 249	28%
250 - 499	34%
300 - 749	20%
750 - 1,499	14%
1,800 or more	06%

The parents of students enrolled in the sample of schools appear to be on the high end of the socioeconomic scale with virtually none of the students coming from families whose parents are blue-collar workers (6%) or unemployed (0.4%). The socioencomic distribution is even more pronounced as far as housing is concerned. Almost a third of the students live in owner occupied homes (33%), with 45 percent living in mostly owner-occupied homes and 16 percent evenly mixed between owner-occupied and rental units.

Given the predominance of students from higher socioeconomic families in the private schools sampled, it is not surprising that in almost 80 percent of the schools students receive no financial aid. The schools are also extremely selective in making their admission decisions. Most schools use either achievement test scores (75%) or past school records (87%) with the majority relying on intelligence test scores (58%) or personal references (67%). Forty-three percent of the schools use all four methods in their admissions process, with another quarter using three.

The Principal

The private school heads surveyed are mostly white (97%), middle aged (72%), two-thirds male (65%), and have at least five years of college. More than a third have a masters degree while slightly less than half (44%) have additional graduate work past their masters degree.

Most of the principals have had considerable experience as a secondary school teacher. Almost half have taught high school for ten years of more. Since most principals surveyed spend so much of their career in the classroom, it is not surprising that their administrative experience is limited. While only 30 percent of the respondents have been principals of another school, more than half have spent some time as school administrator other than head (57%). Most of those surveyed have been head of their current school for three years or less (53%), with a small number having served ten years or more (10%).

The position of private school head appears to be somewhat short-lived. Over sixty percent of the principals report that their school has had between 2 and 3 principals within the past ten years. Regardless of whether they were teachers or administrators, private school heads are just as likely to have been working in the vicinity of their current school or some place else when they were appointed head master.

Curriculum

The private schools sampled all have a core of traditional subjects in common: biology, chemistry, physics, French, mathematics through grade 12, business education and art. Between 50-60 percent of the schools offer Latin, homemaking, and calculus. English

through the 12th grade remains a required subject in virtually all schools. Eighty percent of the schools offer at least seven to ten of the traditional courses under investigation, with the average school offering eight.

Nontraditional courses are less common with one exception: almost three-fourths of the schools offer some kind of social science course (i.e., sociology, anthropology, or psychology). The kinds of nontraditional courses which appear with any frequency have to do with less substantive and more philosophical areas: values clarification/moral education (53%), consumer education (46%), and family life/sex education (35%). In over seventy percent (73%) of the schools all students are required to take a course in religious studies. This percentage approximates that of the Catholic schools participating in the study. In a little less than a quarter of the schools (22%) only students of the school's faith are required to enroll in religious study classes. While 10 percent of the schools sampled offer none of these nontraditional courses, two-thirds offer at least four, with the average school offering three.

While nontraditional courses do not play a major role in private school curricula, with the exception of moral education, private schools do appear to offer students some options in obtaining academic credit outside the classroom. The average school offers three credit alternatives, with three-fourths offering at least one to four different options. Over half the schools allow students

to receive credit for independent study (59%) and college courses on a college or university campus (52%). While a third of the schools offer college level courses within their own curriculum and slightly less than a third allow participation in community volunteer programs, the prevalence of academic options indicates that these alternatives are mostly for the benefit of higher ability students.

Given that private schools are moderately small and that they may have a more specialized mission than public schools, they may only be able to provide a limited number of courses for the academically advanced or disadvantaged. This is born out from an examination of ten different courses catering to individual needs. In over half the schools students can take advanced placement courses (51%) and remedial basic skills instruction (53%), and in almost forty percent (38%) they can graduate early. Most schools (79%), however, have no job placement or dropout prevention programs.

The limited number of alternative programs available may indicate a lack of student interest. Principals report that student participation in such programs, when they exist, is minimal. In over two-thirds of the schools, principals report that no students participate in early graduation and dropout programs with about a quarter of the principals reporting that one to two percent of their student body participate in such programs. Participation in remedial

courses, however, is much higher. While a majority of principals report that no students take remedial reading (46%) or remedial math (51%), almost a third report that between one and nine percent of their students take advantage of such courses.

The tendency for private schools to stress the academic side of the education process may merely reflect the needs and aspirations of their students. Three-fourths of the principals report that their students go on to either two-year college (15%) or four year college (60%).

While private schools appear somewhat limited in the range of their curricular offerings, principals report that their schools have undergone substantial curricular change. More than 60 percent of the principals (61%) report that the number of elective courses available has increased within the past five years as has the school's emphasis on basic reading, writing, and math skills. It appears that the private schools are keeping pace with present day curricular trends.

Although private schools appear to offer a small variety of courses, probably due to specialization or limited resources, they appear flexible in their student evaluation systems. While over 70 percent of the schools surveyed use traditional letter grades (73%), other grade reporting systems are common in twenty to thirty percent of the schools: pass-fail (35%); additional value for more difficult courses (30%); numerical (26%); conferences (22%). While a third of the schools employ no nontraditional grading systems, a third use at least one and a fifth use at least two.

Program Schedules and Facilities

The traditional course structure is mirrored in the traditional scheduling arrangement most private schools use. At least two-thirds of the schools organize their academic year into semesters with about 25 percent supplementing this system with quarterly length courses. Three-fourths of the schools use only one scheduling method (the semester), with the remainder using at least two (semesters and quarters, most likely). Over 70 percent of the schools use a 35 to 60 minute class period. The only alternate scheduling system prevalent is 10 to 30 minutes modules used in 17 percent of the schools.

A diversity of facilities is also uncommon among the private schools surveyed. In addition to most school's having a student cafeteria (88%), the private schools in our sample are most likely to have a career information center (79%) and a remedial reading or math lab (61%). Other commonly provided facilities are an indoor lounge for students (54%), a subject area resource center (46%), and media production facilities (40%). Out of the twelve types of facilities inquired about, most schools (73%) have at least two to five different types of facilities with the average school having four. Alternative schools or programs, child care facilities, and occupational training centers are virtually nonexistent.

School Structure

Principal Role. Private school heads wear many hats in addition to being leaders of their school. A majority of principals report that various aspects of their role--ambassadorial, managerial and collegial--are very important (See Table 2). Another indication of the multiple aspects of the principal's role is provided by an examination of an index of principal role activity. Twenty percent of the school heads play 7-8 of the roles under investigation, with similar percentages filling 6 and 5 roles.

Staffing Differentiation. We examined the number of departments, assistant deans, counselors, and specialists to determine the complexity of staffing patterns (See Table 3). Most schools do not have exceedingly large or small departmental structures: approximately a third have 5-8 departments (37%) while a little less than half have 9-12 (46%).

Almost a fifth of the schools, probably the very smallest, have no assistant school head. While little more than a quarter of the schools (29%) have either 1 or 2 assistants, a fifth have 3-4.

Very few schools report having no counselor (7%) while the great majority have either 1 (43%) or 2 (26%). Specialists, however, appear to be more common. While a fourth of the schools have 2 or less specialists, the remainder have between 3 and 6.

Table 2

Principal Role

	Percent Very Important
Manager	
Long range planning: setting goals	76
Enforcing school rules and policies	65
Resolving or mediating conflicts	62
Managing day-to-day operation of the school	59
Managing the school budget	52
Coordinating with the District	51
Liaison	
Relating personally with students	77
Relating personally with parents and community	73
Colleague	
Working closely with teachers on instruction	65
Involving numerous people in decisionmaking	54
Allowing teachers to instruct according to personal preference	40

Table 3

Staffing Patterns

Number Departments	Percent Schools
Fewer Than	
5	8.0
5-8	37.1
9-12	46.1
13+	8.7
Number Assistant Deans	**Percent Schools**
0	17.6
1	28.8
2	28.8
3-4	20.5
5+	4.5
Number Counselors	**Percent Schools**
0	6.6
1	43.0
2	25.8
3-4	18.5
5+	6.1
Number Specialists	**Percent Schools**
0-2	26.8
3	21.7
4	18.1
5	13.5
6+	17.0

Decisionmaking Participation. We asked principals who among a number of people participate in decisions pertaining to the school. The issues of concern were: teacher selection, adding a new academic course, student rules, course objectives, grading, school goals, and the budget. Response rates were especially low (less than 300/454) for the following decision participants: superintendent, central office personnel, teacher organizations, student representatives, individual students, and parents, which suggests that these people are not especially salient in the private education enterprise.

Of the remainder--school board, principal, assistant administrators, counselors, department heads and teachers--the principal is by far the most active participant being involved on average in 6 of the 7 decisionmaking arenas. Assistant administrators are only slightly less active participants in decisionmaking than principals, budgetary matters being the one area they aren't involved in that principals are.

The remainder of the participants in the decisionmaking process--department heads, counselors, and teachers--are involved in from 3-4 different decision arenas. Their involvement appears to be targeted on areas of professional interest. Department heads are reported as participating in teacher selection, adding a new course, determining course objectives, and grading procedures. Teachers also participate in four decision areas and differ only from their department heads in not participating in teacher selection but in participating in setting school goals. Counselors are the least involved, participating on average in 3 areas: student rules, grading, and school goals.

Principal Authority. Private school heads report having a great deal of responsibility in running their school. Most have considerable or complete authority to allocate budget funds among departments (93%), to choose between hiring one full-time teacher or hiring two teacher aides (97%) and to fill teacher vacancies (99%). This same pattern holds true with their influence outside the school, except as far as financial decisions are concerned. While most (97%) report having considerable or extensive influence in district-level decisionmaking, only two-thirds report having much influence on how the district allocates money to their school.

Coordination Mechanisms

Rules. Principals of private schools report that a great many rules regulate student behavior and school management practices. Teachers, on the other hand, come in for less control through rules (See Table 4).

As for student rules, with the exception of hall pass requirements (47%), almost 80 percent or more of the principals report having either formal or informal rules against smoking (96%), for dress codes (96%), for closed campus at lunch (87%), and holding students responsible for school property damage (98%). On the average, the private schools surveyed have 4.2 rules, with 40 percent having at least four and an equal percentage having at least 5.

Principal Authority and Influence

Authority	Percent Complete	Percent With Considerable
Fill teacher vacancies	74	25
Choose between hiring one full-time teacher or hiring two teacher aides	65	32
Allocate school budget funds among departments	51	42

Influence	Extensive	Considerable
In district-level decisionmaking	73	24
On district budget allocations to your school	28	39

Table 4

School Rules Pertaining to Students,
Teachers, and General Management Issues

	Percent of schools With Formal or Informal Rules
Student Rules	
Responsibility for School Property Damage	98
No Smoking	96
Dress Codes	96
Hall Passes	97
Rules Affecting Teachers	
Noninstructional	
Discipline Students in Class	89
Parental Complaints	73
Instructional	
Outside Speakers in Class	67
Testing frequency	59
Amount of homework given students	58
School Management Issues	
Determinging course objectives	95
Setting rules for student behavior	91
Adopting a new school grading practice	86
Adding a new academic course	83
Setting criteria for evaluating teacher performance	80

Table 4 (Continued)

School Rules Pertaining to Students, Teachers, and General Management Issues

	Percent of Schools With Formal or Informal Rules
School Management Issues (Continued)	
Setting conditions for early exit/early graduation	73
Allocating school budget funds among departments, teachers, or activities	72
Setting criteria for evaluating principal performance	44

Teachers appear to be subject to a variety of school rules in a majority of schools in both noninstructional and instructional areas. While on the average the private schools have 3.5 rules governing teacher behavior, a quarter have from 0-2 rules and a third have at least 5.

A great many rules also exist regarding private school management issues. Of the nine areas investigated, three-fourths or more of the principals report having rules in eight of them, the area with least regulations being 'setting criteria for evaluating principal performance' (44%). While the average school has 6.2 of the 9 rules, a little more than 50 percent have at least 7 or 8 of them.

Meetings. We asked principals how frequently meetings among faculty, departments, and staff occur. They report that meetings with their administrative staff are most frequent, occurring weekly in the majority of schools. While principals report that faculty meetings take place at least once a month or more in more than 80 percent of the schools, departmental meetings (English and Math) occur over the same time period in two-thirds of the schools. Other types of meetings occurring in a majority of schools monthly or more involve department heads (49%) and the principal's planning group (46%)

As with decisionmaking participation, the low number of valid responses (279-393) to items referring to meetings with people outside the school indicate that questions about meetings internal to the school are more applicable to private schools than those dealing with the larger community. The highest response rate in this cluster of questions (393) dealing with people outside the school is to the question asking how frequently principals meet with principals from other schools.

If principals meet with such people as budget specialists, regional administrators, other principals or an advisory board, such meetings according to more than three-fourths of the principals take place from once a month to several times a year.

Thus, the contact principals have with administrators and supervisory groups are much more limited than the types of meetings they report occurring in their schools.

Evaluation. Evaluation for most teachers and principals is an annual event. Forty-six percent of the principals report evaluating their teaching staff once a year with a quarter reporting more frequent teacher evaluations. The principal shares the responsibility of teacher evaluation with his/her administrative staff and the teachers themselves. Principals report that department heads (57%) and assistant principals (40%) participate in the evaluation process and in a third of the cases teacher self-evaluation is employed. This sharing of the evaluation process may explain why three-fourths of the respondents report observing teachers in their classroom

from two or three times a month to several times a year; perhaps, other staff assume this responsibility.

The evaluation of principals appears to be an all or nothing event. Almost 40 percent of those surveyed report being evaluated rarely or not at all, while 50 percent report receiving a formal evaluation once a year or more.

The school heads report that teachers (40%) and members of the school board (38%) most commonly evaluate them. In a quarter of the cases, principals report that their superintendents (22%), central office administrators (25%) and they themselves (27%) evaluate their performance as principal.

Principal Goals, Satisfaction and Problems

The salience of traditional academic programs emerging from the description of private school curriculum is mirrored in the goals principals report having and those they perceive as being important to the parents of their students. Over two-thirds of the principals report that teaching the basic skills (88%) and preparing students for college (68%) are very important educational goals for them. There is one goal principals hold even more strongly, however, than their student's academic preparations; almost all principals say that developing high moral standards and citizenship is very important.

The principals' perceptions of parent goals for their child's education are virtually identical with their own: in decreasing order of importance they report parents as valuing moral standards

(90%), concentrating on the basics (87%) and preparing students for college (77%). The agreement between the goals of principals and what they believe parents consider important is striking and suggestive of philosophical congruity between client and provider. The fact that principals see other goals as being more important than the parents probably has much to do with their own and probably broader professional expectations.

By and large most private school heads are satisfied with their occupation (62%), their faculty (62%) and their relations with their district offices (60%). In two areas, however, the school heads surveyed are somewhat less satisfied. Only 31 percent are very satisfied with their student's achievement and only 42 percent are very satisified with the performance of their governing boards.[4]

One reason private school heads may be satisfied with their jobs is that they do not appear troubled by many school problems. Virtually no more than 15 percent of the principals reported having either serious or very serious problems. There were, however, a series of minor irritants. Evidently a majority of school heads feel mildly frustrated by the smaller size of their school (56%) and the adequacy of instructional materials (54%). The other aspect of school life that poses a minor problem deals with parent

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4. These findings replicate those of the public high school survey. Evidently both public and private school principals tend to be less satisfied with aspects of their job over which they have little control.

and student involvement and commitment. Almost two-thirds of private school heads find that student apathy (69%), parents' lack of interest in students' progress (64%), student absenteeism (63%), and student apathy (61%) are minor irritants. In a similar vein a majority are also midly troubled by parents' lack of involvement in school matters (58%) and students' cutting class (76%).

Conflict within the school also appears to be minimal. If conflict does exist, it appears to occur most frequently (at least once a week) among students (10%) and between students and teachers (12%).

Summary

Private schools schedule programs and courses in a traditional fashion, share a similar core curriculum, and have only limited diversity in course offerings. Private school curriculums appears quite specialized.dealing with ethnical/moral/religious issues, academics, and occasionally remediation. The school structure can be characterized by principals playing a range of roles, the most important according to principals being their ambassadorial--role--relating to parents and students. Staffing is not vey complex with private schools having only a handful of specialists. Decisionmaking participation, however, appears broad-

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5. While the degree to which private school heads report these situations as being problematic is far less than their public school counterparts, it is striking to note that both sets of principals identify a similar repertoire of problems.

based with most organizational participants involved in half the issues under investigation. Coordination through rules and meetings is common, with a modest amount of teacher and principal evaluation occurring.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE COMPARISIONS

Given this brief picture of private school programs and organization, the question remains as to how these characteristics differ among various types of private schools and how private schools differ from public schools. We can address this question by comparing the data from our public and private high school surveys. Since there are such large differences in sizes between the schools in the public and private school samples, we compare only the public and private schools enrolling one thousand or less students. This leaves us with a subsample that is two-thirds public and one-third private. A little more than a quarter of the schools are Catholic (26%) and 7 percent are non-Catholic private schools.

The proportion of Catholic to non-Catholic schools in the subsample is only slightly higher (79%) than the actual percentage of Catholic schools (75%) in the private school population.

To do the comparisions we used the Kruskal Wallis rank analysis, which ranks all schools in each group from high to low. If the groups are all the same, i.e., there is no difference between public, Catholic, and non-Catholic private schools, there

should be very little difference in the number of ranks within each group. If the groups are unequal in their number of ranks, then they differ in some way. The results are reported by which group has the most (H), an average number (M), and least (L) number of ranks, indicating in which group a certain characteristic is the most or least prevalent.

Differences in Programs, Grading, Facilities, Student Outcomes

Programs. Among the nontraditional courses examined, there are only two in which there is any differences among the three groups of schools. Catholic schools are the most likely to offer courses in values clarification and public schools the least. Private schools, especially parochial ones, appear to place greater emphasis on these subjects. The other difference deals with consumer education which is most prevalent in public schools and least prevalent in non-Catholic private schools. Obviously private schools are either less sensitive to curricular trends or unable to afford such responsiveness. Alternatively, private schools may judge such as course inappropriate given their more specialized mission.

Public schools lead the other two in providing more credit options and courses catering to the special needs of students in four out of seven of the comparisons. When it comes to options and courses dealing with academics, however, the private schools are the leaders. Catholic schools are most likely to offer college

level courses, followed by the non-Catholic private schools with the order reversed between the types of private schools, when it comes to college advanced placement courses. Again, it appears as if the non-public schools are more likely to cater to the academically gifted than the public schools.

Grading Systems. Most public and private high schools use traditional grading systems, i.e., letter or numerical grades. We only compared the publics and the privates on grading systems if a large enough percentage of principals in the group as a whole (public or private) reported using a certain grading system. Therefore, we examined differences among the groups for the following: letter grades, numerical, weighted, pass/fail, written narrative, and conferences. There were only two significant differences among the groups. Public schools were least likely to use the weighted or written narrative method of evaluating students, with Catholic schools most likely to use the written narrative. The non-Catholic private school teachers may have and/or may spend more time informing parents about their child's school progress.

Facilities. When the public schools are compared with the private schools of the same size, the private schools, especially the non-Catholic ones, are the most likely to have such facilities as

student lounges, resource centers and departmental offices for teachers. For the remainder of the nine different types of facilities, however, no differences exists between the public and private schools.

Students. While public schools have often been accused of constraining students within the four walls of a classroom, it appears that this criticism is less warranted when public schools are compared to private schools. The publics are much more likely to have their 11th and 12th graders earning credit off campus than either the Catholic or non-Catholic private schools. On the other hand, the privates are likely to have many more of their 11th and 12th grade students involved in extracurricular activities. Private schools probably provide more opportunities for students to participate in a range of activities within the school, while public schools allow students to participate in a number of activities outside the school, leaving a smaller proportion to join in extracurricular activities.

The stress private schools place on college achievement and the emphasis the public schools place on broader social goals is mirrored in differences in what principals report graduates are likely to do after finishing high school. Public high school graduates are most likely to attend two year colleges, vocational institutions or enter the labor market and the armed services. On

Programs, Grading, Facilities, and Student Outcomes

	Public	Catholic	Non-Catholic Private
Nontraditional Courses			
Values Clarification	L	H	M
Consumer Education	H	M	L
College Level Courses	L	H	M
Off Campus Courses	H	M	M
Courses for Special Needs			
College Advance Pl.	L	M	H
Early Graduation	H	L	M
Student Exchange	H	M	M
Remedial	M	M	L
Grading			
Weighted	L	H	M
Written Narrative	L	M	H
Facilities			
Lounge	L	M	H
Resource Center	L	H	H
Department Offices	L	M	H
Students			
% 11th Graders Off Campus	H	L	L
% 12th Graders Off Campus	H	L	L
% 11th Graders Extracur.	L	M	H
% 12th Graders Extracur.	L	M	H
% Graduates to 2 Yr. College	H	M	L
% Graduates to 4 Yr. College	L	M	L
% Graduates to Voc. Institutions	H	M	L
% Graduates to Labor Market	H	L	L
% Graduates to Armed Services	H	L	L

the other hand, the private schools, with the non-Catholic privates leading, are most likely to send their graduates on to four year colleges or universities.

School Structure

Comparing the public, Catholic, and non-Catholic private schools on our structure variables results in a somewhat mixed picture. No consistent pattern of school structure emerges in one type of school or the other. Rather the description of school structure depends on the variable under examination.

Principal Role. The role variables are somewhat inconsistent in their categorization of principals. Public school principals are much more likely to work closely with teachers on instructional matters than either of their private school counterparts. But colleagueship for the public school principal appears to stop at the classroom door. The private school heads are much more likely to involve members of the school staff in the decisionmaking arena. This is quite clearly demonstrated when the decisionmaking participation variables are examined. Public schools rank lowest in terms of staff, faculty, and client participation in school decisionmaking. The data support the common perception of private schools as being more open to parent and teacher involvement in ongoing school activities as far as decisionmaking participation is concerned.

Table 5

School Structure

	Public	Catholic	Non-Catholic Private
Colleague			
Working closely with teachers	H	M	L
Involve many in decisionmaking	L	M	H
Manager			
Enforce school rules	H	M	L
Manage daily operations	H	M	M
Manage school budget	L	M	H
Long range planning	L	M	H
Staffing			
No. of Departments	M	H	L
No. of Ass't Deans	L	H	M
No. of Counselors	M	H	L
No. of Specialists	H	L	M
No. of Adults	H	L	M
Decisionmaking Part			
Administrator Part	L	H	H
Client Part	L	H	H
Total Schl. Part	L	H	H
Authority			
Budget Allocation	L	H	M
Hiring Teachers	L	H	M
Fill Teacher Vacancies	L	H	M
Influence			
District Allocation to Schools	L	M	H
District Decisions	L	H	H

There is also a split on the measure of managerial role. Public school principals are much more likely to place importance on the daily operation of the school, through such actions as rule enforcement. For private heads, especially the non-Catholic private school administrators, managing the school budget and long range planning appear most important. Perhaps private heads are more involved with impersonal aspects of management because such issues are vital to the school's survival. Alternatively, they lack the cushion of an outside bureaucracy which assumes such functions.

Staffing. The Catholic schools appear to have the most complex staffing arrangements; they have the greatest number of departments, assistant principals, and counselors. Public schools are next in line. On two of the staffing measures, however, public schools rank the highest: number of specialists and number of adults (aides and volunteers). Public schools probably have such personnel because of their federal and state categorical programs, which support specialists for such activities as remedial reading and education of the handicapped. Private schools usually do not receive such funds. Probably because of church/state distinctions, Catholic schools are least likely to benefit from these categorical programs and therefore are least likely to have such special personnel. Non-Catholic private schools with some budgetary flexibility, on the other hand, may opt to hire such specialized staff.

Authority and Influence. Public school principals appear to have the least authority and influence in running their schools. On every measure of authority and influence the public school principal ranks lowest. Interestingly enough, the school head with the most authority and influences appears to be the Catholic school administrator. Since both the public and Catholic schools have 'downtown' bureaucracies, be they district or diocisian, the mere existence of the external bureaucracy cannot account for the low level of public school principal's authority. Evidently, the Catholic bureaucracy functions in a different fashion than its public school counterpart, given the large differences in authority at the local school level.

Coordination

Much as with the comparisons of measures of school structure, no unifying picture emerges when public and private schools are compared on measures of coordination. Coordination through rules and meetings appears more common in the private schools. Coordination through teacher evaluation is most common in the public schools while coordination through principal evaluation is most common in the Catholic schools.

Rules. Public and private schools are similar in their restrictions on smoking and requiring student responsibility for damage to school property. A closed campus is least common and hall passes most common in the public schools, while student dress

codes are most prevalent in the private schools. The differential emphasis on school rules suggests that each type of school probably faces a different set of needs with regard to regulating student conduct. Court contests and dungaree mores have resulted in the public school's abandonment of established dress code policies. Yet student whereabouts appear to be highly regulated through the use of hall passes, a mechanism private schools need not use given their more homogeneous student bodies and accepted and agreed upon norms of conduct.

Given the greater emphasis private schools place on the academics, it is not surprising that public schools less likely to regulate teacher instructional activity less (amount of homework required). The Catholic and public schools are similar in their control of teacher activity with rules about outside speakers.

Meetings. Coordination through meetings is more common in the private schools. Perhaps these meetings, serving as a forum for the school faculty and staff, is where the high degree of decisionmaking participation occurs which private school heads report.

Evaluation. Little difference exists between the public and private schools as to who evaluates teachers, with one exception. Department heads play a greater role in teacher evaluation in

Table 6

Coordination

	Public	Catholic	Non-Catholic Private
Rules			
Students			
Closed Campus	L	H	H
Hall Passes	H	L	L
Student Dress	L	H	H
Teacher			
Outside Speaker	H	H	L
Amount of Homework	L	H	H
Meeting			
School Monthly	M	H	H
Evaluation			
Frequency Teacher	H	M	L
Frequency Classroom Obs.	H	M	L
Frequency Teacher Eval. by Department Heads	L	H	M
Frequency Principal Eval. by Board	L	L	H
by Superintendent	H	L	M
by District	M	H	L
by Assistant Deans	L	H	L
by Teachers	L	H	M

Catholic schools than in either public or non-Catholic private schools. The frequency of teacher evaluation--whether for evaluation or observation--is highest in public schools.

The governance structure appears to dictate to a large extent who participates in the evaluation of the high school principal. The superintendent most commonly evaluates public school administrators, while the school board evaluates the performance of non-Catholic private school heads. Both the 'district' office and the school staff are active in evaluating the Catholic school head master.

Problems

Private school heads report having few problems. Therefore, it is not surprising that a comparison of public and private schools in terms of the problems principals report as being very serious, indicates that the public schools have the most problems on every dimension. Student and parent apathy, paper work mandated by external authorities, and conflict among students and between teachers and students are all greatest in the public schools.

Given that the schools in this subsample are all the same size, it is interesting that public school principals are most likely to report that small school size is a serious problem. Evidently it is much more acceptable for private school heads to run small schools than it is for public school principals.

Table 7

Problems

	Public	Catholic	Non-Catholic Private
School too small	H	L	L
Inadequate instructional Materials	H	M	L
Student Absenteeism	H	M	L
Cutting Class	H	L	L
Student Apathy	H	M	L
Student Descriptiveness	H	M	L
Parental Lack of Interest	H	M	L
Parental Lack of Involvement	H	M	L
Paper Work			
District	H	M	L
State	H	L	M
Federal	H	L	M
Conflict			
Among Students	H	L	L
Between Students/Teachers	H	M	L

The Principal

This last section compares the public and private school principals on their demographic characteristics, goals and the goals they perceive the parents of their students having, and their level of satisfaction.

Sex. While most of the public school principals are male (98%), only two-thirds of the private school heads are male. The women principals are most likely to head the Catholic schools, which is probably explained by the prevalence of religiously affiliated women in the Catholic school system.

Experience. The non-Catholic private schools appear to have the most stable management. Private schools are most likely to have the current administrator the longest, a head who has had experience as an assistant school administrator, and the least turnover within the last ten years. Turnover of principals is highest in Catholic schools. Catholic school administrators have had the most classroom experience when compared with their private and public school counterparts.

Goals. Public and private school principals agree on the importance of the following goals to the education of their students: teaching basic skills, developing moral standards, teaching social skills, and developing individual responsibility for learning. They only differ in three areas. Public school principals rank highest

in the goal of vocational preparation. The private school heads, regardless of religious affiliation, are more likely to report that college preparation is a very important goal. Catholic school principals stress developing aesthetic appreciation more than the public school or non-Catholic private school principals.

While the similarities among the principals are more striking than the differences, such is not the case with principal's perceptions of the goals parents have for their children's education. The private school heads are much more likely to perceive parents as having a broad range of educational goals for their children than are the public school principals. Regardless of religious affiliation, private heads are most likely to report that parents believe that college preparation, development of aesthetic appreciation and the fostering of social skills are important goals for a high school education. While the Catholic school heads believe that parents stess moral education more, the private heads report that parent concern for instilling individual responsibility for learning is highest.

Satisfaction. On most measures of principal satisfaction occupation as school head, relations with the governing board, relations with parents and community, and the performance of the governing or school board--no appreciable difference exists between public and private school principals. There are two measures, however,

Table 8

Principal Satisfaction

	Public	Catholic	Non-Catholic Private
Sex	L	H	L
Education	-	-	-
Experience			
This School	M	L	H
School Adm., Not Prin.	L	M	H
Secondary Teacher	M	H	L
Number of Principals in School in 10 Yrs.	M	H	L
Satisfaction			
Faculty	L	M	H
Student Achievement	L	M	H
Goals--Principal			
Voc. Prep.	H	M	L
College	L	H	H
Aesthetic	L	H	M
Goals--Parents			
Moral	L	H	M
Social Skills	L	H	H
Responsibility for Learning	L	M	H
Voc. Prep.	H	M	L
College	L	H	H
Aesthetic	L	H	H

in which the non-Catholic private heads are the most satisfied: with their faculty and their student's achievement. The stress on academic preparation and flexible teacher hiring practices may account for the satisfaction of private school heads in these two areas.

SUMMARY

Public and private schools differ in the scope of the mission. Public schools are responsible for providing educational opportunity to all regardless of race, ability or any other distinguishing characteristic. Because of this equity mandate they provide a wide range of courses suitable for a heterogeneous clientele with differing needs. And public schools appear moderately successful in accomplishing this mission: most of their graduates go on to college. This mandate is not an easy one to accomplish. Parents and students do not appear to provide much support given the level of apathy principals report. Carrying out this mandate is especially difficult in smaller schools which principals are more than likely to perceive as inadequate to the task.

Private schools, on the other hand, have a more limited mission: to provide a specialized education in the most efficient manner possible. Private schools have a narrower curriculum focussed mostly on academic subjects. While their clientele isn't any less homogeneous than that of the public schools surveyed, private schools distinguish themselves in that most of their graduates go on solely to higher education.

With this narrower mission it is not suprising that private school administrators find little problem in managing smaller schools. Since private schools focus on one main speciality, size does not pose the same limitations that it does in a public school.

Private schools also appear more responsive to their clientele and staff. Decisionmaking participation of parents and faculty and the number of meetings held are greater in private than public schools. Far more dependent on their consistuency, private schools are more likely to spend time garnering support through such participatory mechanisms.

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